

Monthly Borough Report March 2024

- **Council potentially owed millions in uncollected capital receipts.**

The Executive have been investigating the disaggregation agreement between Bedford Borough Council (BBC) and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to ensure all money BBC is owed has been collected.

A preliminary investigation has uncovered various pieces of land noted in the disaggregation agreement that have either been sold off or developed, proceeds of which should be split on the basis of 63% CBC and 37% BBC between April 2009 and March 2030. But the Borough has received no capital receipts for and/or failed to collect this for successive years.

A very significant amount of land (199.167 acres) is being investigated which could have resulted in a significant amounts of money, that could have prevented cuts to services and eased financial pressures for many prior years, being completely missed out on.

The Executive is now working with its Officers and CBC to further investigate the status lands the Borough believes it has not received capital receipts and will pursue all measures to ensure any money owed, is collected.

- **LTA Funding under threat after opposition motion**

At the most recent Full Council a motion had been passed by opposition parties instructing the Council re-negotiate already agreed terms and conditions for funding by the LTA for the Borough's Tennis courts.

As the motion is demanding the Executive re-negotiate these terms and conditions, the £400,000 worth of grant money is under threat. This means all the dangerous courts in Bedford Borough will not be refurbished and will continued to fall into an extreme state of disrepair which would lead to them eventually closing permanently.

- **NHS Staff announce 48 hour strike at Luton Dunstable and Bedford hospital.**

The union UNISON has confirmed more than 400 workers will be taking strike action beginning on the 11th of March, Monday 7.30am and last 48 hours.

The strike action will be effecting Bedfordshire Hospitals (Bedford and Luton & Dunstable) and it is advised that any residents who have appointments to check with the hospital if their appointments are still going ahead as planned or if they will need to re-arrange or if these appointments have already been re-arranged.

- **Philharmonia Orchestra**

The Philharmonia Orchestra will be doing pop up performances session over 3 days in March. The Philharmonia's activity takes place on Friday 1 March, Saturday 2 March and Saturday 9 March. There will be accompanying VR (virtual reality) activity on Friday 1 and Saturday 9 March. All events are free and open to all.

Performances will take place on:

- 1st March with performances at the Harpur Centre

- 2nd March the timetable for performances is:
 - 10:30 – Damiano Hair
 - 11:00 – Kempston Library
 - 11:00 – Bedford Central Library
 - 13:00 – The Higgins Bedford
 - 13:00 – Queens Park Family Hub
 - 14:00 – Samsons Academy Gym
 - 15:30 – Barley Mow pub
 - 16:00 – The Standard pub
 - To be confirmed: Bedford Bus Station
- 9th March sessions will take place at St Paul's Church
- **Garden waste bin collections**

Garden waste bin collections will be starting again from 1st March, residents are advised to put their garden waste bins alongside the recycling bins by 6am on their next collection day.

You can check collection dates and other waste services, at <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/.../household-bins-and-recycling>

- **Bus service**

For the last 13 years the whole of the Borough's bus service operations and routes have not been reviewed additionally, unsuccessful bids for fund means Bedford Borough only receives a small amount (£546k) the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

To put that into perspective Luton and Central Bedfordshire received £19.1m and £3.7m respectively. So, the £546k was a consolation prize in 23/24, we will receive the same amount again in 24/25.

Despite the financial pressure and historic lack of management, the current administration will be conducting a long overdue review of the whole bus service operations and routes. They are also looking at some new models of operation to see if smaller buses in the rural areas might be able to feed into more main routes.

- **Grant Palmer 44 service**

Despite financial pressures the Council extended the Grant Palmer 44 service on the 26th February benefitting users of Elstow Park and Ride site, along with residents and commuters in Flitwick and Ampthill. The service is being extended by the Council utilising the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP+) grant funding from the Government and ensures continued accessibility and convenience for residents and commuters.

- **SEND School and update**

Despite financial pressures the Council is building a £26million SEND school in Kempston at the former site of Robert Bruce Middle School and will have places for 200 children and young people from across Bedford Borough.

The children attending this new school will predominantly have profound and multiple learning disabilities, severe learning disabilities and autism and will be open in phases and is on track to be delivered on time.

In addition, the old Robert Bruce School was scheduled to be demolished however, it has been discovered that there are pregnant bats now in the School. Due to this, the Council is awaiting guidance from Natural England on how to proceed.

- **Mowsbury Golf Course**

Due to excessive amounts of rainfall Mowsbury Golf Course, like many Golf courses across the UK, has been closed due to repeated flooding.

GLL are looking at the current drainage provision and working with the grounds maintenance provider to look at ways to improve drainage provision.

- **More money to manage Drainage**

Due to inherited budget restrictions the Council has limited equipment and resources however, the Council will be using £470,000 which will be used to conduct more highways work to hire more equipment and put together a cyclical drainage programme so drains and gully's are more efficiently cleansed.

- **Home Upgrade Grant expands**

The Council will be announcing significant enhancements to the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) scheme, making it easier for more residents to access vital energy-saving home improvements and further reducing fuel poverty across the borough.

The changes will ensure the Council continues to support residents during extremely challenging times.

Residents can find further information and apply for HUG2 at:
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/environmental-issues/sustainability/home-upgrade-grant> or
<https://hugapply.co.uk/2023/09/06/hello-world/>